Survival Kit Components:

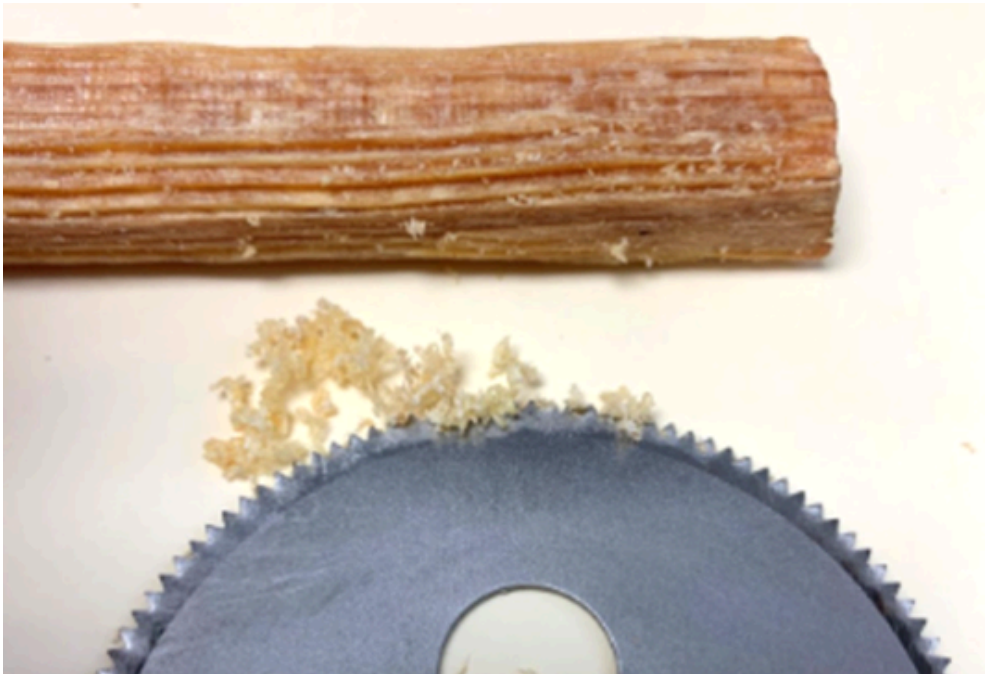
I like to make my own survival kits, and as many of the kit components as I can. Here are some examples.

Pill Bags: Tiny pill bags have many survival uses. One use is to store small amounts of fire-starting materials, such as these examples. The bags keep the various materials dry and separated, and they are also easy to label.

Shown here are several common fire-starting materials, and close-up of a bag of fine bamboo scrapings.

I make fine bamboo scrapings by using a tool, to scrape any dry piece of bamboo. The tool shown here is an old cast cutter saw blade, but any similar tool also works, such as a section of hacksaw blade, or the serrations found on some knife blades. Fine scrapings can be produced using the sharp edge of a piece of broken glass or obsidian, or flint, or almost any sharp metal edge.

Fine bamboo scrapings light easily from a spark or coal if dry, but most wood scrapings will also light well, because the tiny scrapings are mostly surface area with very little mass, so a small spark can heat them up to the required temperature for ignition, while thicker shavings are usually much harder to heat up with a spark.



Fatwood (resin-soaked pine wood) is a well-known natural fire-starting material found in dead pine stumps (and sold in stores), but it is even easier to ignite when made into very fine scrapings, such as this example.

Pill bags are a good way to keep char cloth dry. Char cloth is just charred cotton cloth, which will catch even the weakest spark, and is the tinder of choice for the traditional flint and steel fire-starting method.

I like to cut a cotton bandana (or old t-shirt) into small squares for charring, then store a few in each bag. Shown here is a metal Altoids can (which has a small hole in the lid), that can be used to make more char cloth, and which also holds the flint and steel and packets of finished char cloth, in a small package.

Charred cloth (and other organic material that can be used for fire-starting when charred, such as grass or tinder fungus), must be kept as dry as possible for best ignition results, and the bags work really well.

Another fun fire-starting item is what I call fatwood and jute “matches”. Fatwood is cut into short lengths and split down to matchstick size, then wrapped with a short length of jute string. Jute string makes a good firestarting tinder on its own, just unravel a short length (to separate the fibers), and then it will ignite with a spark from a flint stick. The matches are like tiny torches, and can be made from small sticks or split bits of wood if you don’t have fatwood. The notches in the matchsticks shown here are optional, jute will bind to the sticks, just unravel the string a bit at a time, as you wrap the jute around the stick, and it will adhere.

(You don’t “strike” these matches; to use one just unravel a bit of the jute fiber, then ignite it with a spark.)

I like to cut my jute matchsticks so that they will fit into pill bags, to protect them and keep them dry.

Large plastic straws can be used as tiny containers, by cutting to your desired size, and then sealing the ends. I prefer larger size clear straws, so I can see the contents. Just clamp one end with a hemostat or similar tool and leave a bit of the end exposed, and seal the end by melting it with a lighter. These are good for holding small amounts of salt, pepper, and spices, but you can use them for any tiny items that you can fit inside. My examples are a few pills, a bit of snare wire, flint stick with cotton and vaseline, minimal fishing kit and sewing kit, some salt, and bait (peanut butter), which is used by smearing a tiny amount onto trap triggers.

Bubble tea straws are even larger, and tiny containers made from these straws can hold more items.

Here is a selection of small items, sealed in lengths of the bubble tea straws. There is a reasonable length of fine snare wire in the first one, a flint stick with some cotton and vaseline fire starter in the second one, a long length of 50 lb braided fishing line in the third one, and a good amount of fishhooks and sinkers in the fourth one (and a few large sewing needles, so the fishing line can also be used for repairs, or sutures).

Here are the same items in the bubble tea straw containers, shown with a tiny neck knife and a tiny Alonefire flashlight. (The plastic bag in this image is larger than a pill bag.) For the fishing line and for the snare wire, I use a Q-tip type swab that has a wooden shaft, mark the length that I want, and place it in a variable-speed drill, then wind the cordage on the Q-tip until it will just fit inside the straw (or other container I might use).

Here is another tiny container I like (a plastic rest tube) and just a few items, to make a very minimal kit.

I wrapped the braided fishing line around the flint stick, needle, hooks, and sinkers, for this example.
This test tube is 12 mm by 100 mm, and it also makes a good improvised fishing float, when empty.

And here I used separate test tubes, to hold my snare wire, fishing line, and fishhooks, sinkers, and needles. The test tubes are easier to open and reseal than straws, they can be used as floats, and they have other uses.

These test tubes are slightly different. They seal with corks, and are shorter (12 mm by 60 mm), so they just fit inside the pill bags that I like. Sown here with the same items, plus a flint stick and folding razor.

Here are the shorter test tubes stored inside a pill bag, with the flint stick, and the tiny folding razor blade.

For a size comparison, these 12 mm thick test tubes will just fit inside one of the bubble tea straws.

And here are both types of test tubes together (with a few other kit items), to illustrate the relative sizes. In this case I used shorter test tubes to hold tinder; bamboo scrapings, cotton and vaseline, and jute twine.

And here are some of the test tubes, shown stored in plastic bags (which also helps to prevent spills).

I found that three of the short test tubes will just fit inside an empty tic tac container, with a flint and razor, creating the tiny tic tac survival kit. Many other containers can also be used to make kits and components, so feel free to improvise and make substitutions, and see what useful combinations you can come up with.